

Appl. No.: 10/620,249

**AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS**

The following listing of claims replaces all prior listings of claims in the present application.

**What Is Claimed Is:**

1. (previously presented) A storage system, comprising:

one or more slow-access-time-mass-storage nodes, coupled to store data at respective first ranges of logical block addresses (LBAs);

a plurality of interim-fast-access-time nodes, configured to operate independently of one another, each interim-fast-access-time node being assigned a respective second range of the LBAs and coupled to receive data from and provide data to the one or more slow-access-time-mass-storage nodes having LBAs within the respective second range; and

one or more interface nodes, which are adapted to receive input/output (IO) requests from host processors directed to specified LBAs and to direct all the IO requests to the interim-fast-access-time node to which the specified LBAs are assigned;

wherein the interim-fast-access-time nodes are configured to be reassignable to a further second range of the LBAs.

2 (original) A storage system according to claim 1,

wherein the one or more interface nodes comprise a mapping between the interim-fast-access-time nodes and the LBAs, and

wherein the one or more interface nodes are adapted to convert the IO requests to one or more requests and to direct the one or more requests to respective one or more interim-fast-